

## History of The New Brunswick Federation of Music Festivals

Starting in 1967, there were discussions among local festival organizers and music teachers about establishing a provincial federation. In 1967, the NB Centennial Committee purchased a Centennial Rose Bowl Trophy. It was given to the NB Competitive Festival in Saint John to safeguard until such time as there was an annual Provincial Finals in NB. Due to lack of funds, fatigue of volunteers after the centennial celebrations, and some floundering local festivals, it was five years before the NB Federation of Music Festivals was formed and the first NB Provincial Music Festival Finals was held. The real catalyst for the forming of the federation was a decision by the national group, the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals, not to allow local festivals to send competitors to the National Music Festival. Although controversial, in 1971 the FCMF reorganized to only allow Provincial Festival memberships, rather than individual festival memberships. This meant the pressure was on to form a provincial body.

Organizational meetings of local festival representatives and music teachers were held, beginning in December 1971. The new organization, calling itself the New Brunswick Federation of Music Festivals, met May 8, 1972, the day before the first Provincial Finals in Saint John. Five of the seven competitors (one in each offered discipline of voice, piano, strings, woodwind and brass) were recommended to the National Music Festival held in Toronto, in September. There, New Brunswick won a second place in voice, and a tie for third in piano.

October 14, 1972 is considered the first annual meeting of the federation, although it was the fourth meeting of the organizers. A slate of officers was elected to replace the interim executive, with Father Maurice LeBlanc as president, and Hectorine Lauzier as secretary. By the third annual meeting (1974), a constitution had been agreed upon and procedure for incorporation would be completed. In the early years the New Brunswick government had representatives from the Department of Education and Department of Youth on the Board of Directors and involved in decision-making.

By 1975 a sixth class for Chamber Ensemble and a taped choral competition had been added to the National Music Festival, with New Brunswick following suite.

From the outset, some guiding principles were established. It was agreed that the Provincial Music Festival Finals should be held in a different community of the province each year. The federation would seek to communicate in, and promote both official languages. It was agreed that the Provincial Music Festival, and advancement to the National Music Festival, be accessible to all New Brunswick musicians. This established an early pattern of the federation covering expenses of competitors.

Throughout the years the number of affiliated festivals in province has fluctuated. In all, about thirty festivals have functioned in the province at one time or another. Some floundered and were reorganized a number of years later; others lapsed into non-existence.

The NB government was a financial contributor to the federation and provincial music festival from the beginning. In 1987, NBFMF began receiving a lump sum of \$10,000 from the government with a portion to be distributed to local festivals at 75 cents per entry, and the remainder to go towards the operational budget of the federation. The same funding formula has continued for the last 20 years. At the time NBFMF was only required to pay 6 cents per entry to FCMF as the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce was a major sponsor. When the CIBC withdrew as a sponsor in the mid -1990s, affiliation fees rose sharply to 20 cents, then 35 cents, and now 70 cents per entry. Although the NB government has been a consistent contributor, the grant monies have not kept pace with the rising costs of fulfilling our mandate.

The new millennium stimulated discussions for possible changes in the organizational structure. Over three years the idea of adding a junior level of competition to involve more local festivals, and provide a service to the province's younger music students, was researched. In 2003 the first junior level of competition was held. Two years later, as a result of feedback from local festivals and teachers, we restructured again to provide a junior, intermediate, and senior level of competition in all seven disciplines being offered at the national level (classical guitar having been added to the previous six). This new format has been well received and there has been significant growth in the number of local festivals represented, and the number of competitors participating in the Provincial Music Festival Finals. The format of the choral competition being done by recording has remained unchanged, although several new classes were added at the national and provincial levels in 2006 and 2007.

Over the years, NBFMF has maintained ties with the national organization, the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals, by sending delegates to the Annual General Meeting, having board members serve on the National executive, and by hosting the National Music Festival in 1985, 1996, and 2007.

Information gleaned from *Festivals: A History of Competitive Music Festivals in New Brunswick 1935 – 2007*, by Gail Carleton